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ABSTRACT

The Continuing Education Unit (CEU) is defined as a uniform system for measuring and recognizing individual participation in informal learning situations. The CEU may be easily applied to all formats of post secondary education which have a legitimate sponsor and a responsible and knowledgeable person as instructor. Education on a continuing basis is central to professional development in any field. Sponsor responsibilities in building a meaningful program, user acceptance, and alternatives to CEU are also presented in this two-part article which parallels Professor Grogan's remarks before the 90th Annual National Association of Professional Engineers Convention, July 12, 1972, Boston, Mass. (Author/MW)

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Q new concepts in packaging continuing education

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Program of Continuing Education Units (CEU or "Q") envisions a system of accreditation whereunder study and/or practice and experience would be duly recognized and credited to an individual's lifelong education account. Prof. Grogan's remarks here parallel those made before the 90th annual NAPE convention July 12, 1972, Boston, Mass.

Three basic elements of a profession have been suggested. They are: (1) demonstrated mastery over a continuously evolving body of knowledge that is subsequently applied skillfully and unfailingly in the service of the public. (2) A commitment to the advancement and sharing of that body of knowledge so that each generation, while a debtor to previous generations, becomes benefactor to succeeding generations. (3) The earned respect of society at large deriving from fulfillment of fundamental requirements of a profession of valuable public service.

NAPE is at the threshold of professional status based upon these fundamental elements. Mere knowledge of a subject is not enough; there must be an advancement and sharing of knowledge. Society at large must "know that you know" and hold you in their esteem by virtue of your proven knowledge and dedication to the extension and perpetuation of knowledge in the service of present society and coming generations.

The professions of medicine and law, for example, have long-standing traditions of educational requirements followed by the successful completion of admissions examinations, which permit entry to the profession. More recently, the engineering profession has conferred professional standing subject to increasingly broad and rigidly applied standards of proof of subject matter mastery. Thus, the elements are present for NAPE members to attain full professional status. All that is needed is for the leadership of the Association and the constituent state organizations and chapters to excel in the full context of what professional status represents.

A virtual lifetime commitment to learning is becoming an essential requirement for the maintenance of fundamental professional competence. Toward this end, those standards that characterize a profession are comparatively easy to attain in a membership organization with the charter and objectives of NAPE.

However, recognition of professional status in the eyes of the public is largely a matter of image. We are at the threshold of experiencing a breakthrough concerning the nationally emerging *Continuing Education Unit* as described below. This unit offers NAPE, and all other professionally-conscious organizations, the opportunity to design recognition programs based upon meaningful accomplishments which will earn the public esteem essential to confirmed professionalism. The path to such recognition cannot be cheap or easy. Its intrinsic worth can be no more, in the final analysis, than the effort put into it by participating individuals. NAPE can assume a leadership role in shaping the destiny of its constituency insofar as internal recognition being earned and external recognition being bestowed upon them because of their sincerity and dedication to achieving greater excellence through the conscious pursuit of continuing education.

Uniform System of Recognition

Several years ago a national task force was authorized by an ad hoc National Planning Conference on the topic of continuing education. In the course of its deliberations, the task force recommended "that a uniform system be adopted for measuring and recognizing individual participation in continuing education." The recommendation consisted of two parts and is essentially as follows:

1) Any post-secondary level educational experience, exclusive of that which contributes directly toward a diploma, degree, journeyman's skill, or licensable proficiency (for example, radio operator, airplane pilot, barber, certified welder), may be defined as continuing education. This definition may be applied by the sponsor solely on the basis of educational merit without regard to format, content, level, or audience served by the offering.

2) The accumulation of learning experiences by individuals through such sponsored programs may be measured, accumulated, transferred and recognized in terms of continuing education units. Each unit derives from ten hours of participation in an organized learning activity that is offered by a clearly identifiable sponsor of continuing education and is carried out under competent course direction and instruction.

These two thoughts, one of which is an extension of the other, serve first to define the entity known as continuing education and then proceed to establish the uniform standard for its measure. Continuing education and its unit of measure are just as simple as the basic physical property of length of being expressed in the English system of measurement. Any other measurement would be just as logical. Indeed, there are many units of length, each used

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for a specific purpose.

The continuing education unit, used in its own province, is a mere matter of convenience. Note, for example, that the unit is decimally related to the instructional hour. The fundamental unit of the classroom hour is the most common module of educational experience. The simple convention of ten hours of participation in organized learning being the equivalent of one continuing education unit should prove to be a great convenience when assigning the appropriate number of units to representative learning experiences, regardless of level, content, length, or format. These latter and somewhat surprising freedoms from concern will be explained below.

The greatest rationale for the newly emergent continuing education unit (CEU or, simply, "Q") is the ease and universality with which it may be applied to already existing programs of continuing education. The mere quantification of knowledge transfer associated with an informal learning experience applies equally well to all such programs, although they may be as varied in their sources of sponsorship and detailed attention to individual accomplishment as they are broad in their choice of subjects and variety of formats. At this stage, we cannot designate "several different kinds" of continuing education any more than there can be "several different kinds" of education for academic credit. Continuing education is unique, however broad, and is used to serve the unique needs not now being served by the diploma- and degree-oriented system of education.

Further, it may be said in defense of CEU that it is easily and immediately capable of being applied at any recognizable level of continuing education. The lower threshold begins with post-secondary education by virtue of the definition of continuing education given in the opening paragraph. This level of application is broadly applicable to large numbers of people. At the other limit of the continuing education spectrum, CEU may be applied to post-doctoral participation in highly specialized and individualized professional learning experiences.

Determination of "Q"

CEU applies equally well to all formats of continuing education as long as there is a legitimate sponsor and a knowledgeable and responsible person associated with the organization of the learning experience. The validity and acceptance of the system of measurement depends upon the skill and dedication of that person in establishing the appropriate number of CEU to be attached to the program he conducts. He alone is most intimately aware of the scope, format, content, degree of participation, and other significant educational parameters applicable to his particular informal mode of learning. With this knowledge, the course director must decide upon the equivalent number of instructional hours required in a conventional classroom situation to achieve the same educational purpose or degree of knowledge transfer.

This task need be neither as difficult nor as uncertain as it may first appear. Experienced educators surely have the ability to judge the general amount of educational content associated with a typical recitation period or its multiple in terms of a standard quarter-hour or semester-hour credit as customarily used. He is merely asked to apply this same judgment when determining the educational content of his continuing education programs, as measured in CEU, regardless of the independent variables of level and format.

CEU is also completely universal with respect to the range of the instructional content and the qualifications of the user group for whom the experience is intended. Questions concerning the great degree of variability tolerated by CEU, as influenced by the several educational parameters of level, scope, content, format and audience, tend to answer themselves once the units are applied for recognition purposes. This derives from the fact that "the utility of CEU lies wholly in the eyes of the beholder." One cannot conceive of teaching water chemistry in the same way to watch engineers, skilled laboratory technicians, and research scientists. Yet each is deserving of "Q" in his own right when pursuing an appropriate course in water technology.

Transferable Credits

The system of CEU as recommended by the task force permits learning opportunities which are readily available and credits which are transferable. Sponsorship and subsequent award of CEU enjoys a great degree of latitude, including sources which are outside traditional academia. Sources may include: (1) publicly and privately supported institutions of higher education; (2) proprietary schools of various types; (3) hired consultants or instructional staffs in programs sponsored by various organizations; (4) professional cadres engaged in educational programming on a free-lance basis; (5) on-the-job training; (6) in-plant programs taught by recognized experts; (7) self-taught experiences that can be evaluated by a willing sponsor; (8) educational committee activities of associations, professions, and technical societies.

CEU may seem so universally available and applicable at this stage that it is in danger of losing its intended meaning. This could become a cause for concern before the unit has had an opportunity to gain acceptance. However, the next major innovation suggested by the task force is that CEU have merit only in such instances where it meets the needs or specifications of a particular user group. Such groups view the unit only to determine whether it serves the needs of their clientele.

There is a very large number and variety of groups in the country for whom CEU has potential use.* Each of these has its own membership requirements and educational objectives. Thus, the opportunity is ever present for the evaluation of continuing education opportunities by these groups.

*The Federal Government lists 35,000 employment categories in this country.

NEXT MONTH: sponsor responsibilities in building a meaningful program, user acceptance, alternatives, and what CEU means to NAPE members.

Q

new concepts in packaging continuing education

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Last month, Prof. Grogan described a new concept in continuing education which provides for a uniform system for measuring and recognizing individual participation in informal learning situations. The continuing education unit (CEU or "Q") may be easily applied to all formats of post secondary education which have a legitimate sponsor and a responsible and knowledgeable person as instructor. Education on a continuing basis is central to professional development in any field and is a significant concern of NAPE members. It represents a lifetime commitment to learning and is an essential requirement for the maintenance of fundamental professional competence.

2 CURRICULA built in terms of CEU are infinitely varied and are easily updated to serve the changing needs and interests of any user group. Institutional accreditation is not necessary under the separation of interest and function between sponsors and user groups. The latter are typically more interested in the *offering* than the offerer. User groups may be expected to accept or reject the attendant CEU largely on the basis of whether or not the offering fits their need. The sponsor, meanwhile, can concentrate upon the quality and relatedness of his offering and not be concerned about the structure of an artificial curriculum to which he must either hold or modify continuously to meet changing circumstances.

Many sponsors are permitted under this scheme. The primary objective of a continuing education offering is to meet the educational goals of an individual or of the particular organization with which he is affiliated and which sits in judgment on his progress. Ready transferability of records from a great many sponsors over time and place barriers are other attributes of the CEU system as conceived and instituted to date.

Sponsor Responsibilities

The additional burdens imposed upon the sponsor of the continuing education experience are minimal as a consequence of adapting to the CEU mode. The qualifications to become a recognized sponsor include: some form of license, charter, or authority to engage in continuing education activities; recognized competence in the subject matter; and a commitment to establish and maintain a readily accessible individual record concerning the award of CEU.

A by-product of this effort is that sponsors of continuing education also achieve a common denominator around which the use of facilities, faculties and budgets may be programmed and compared. This may be done not only among various sponsors, but with their formal education counterparts as well.

Pilot projects have been carried out recently by extension arms of a number of major educational institutions in terms of awarding CEU and establishing individual records. The extra burden of this additional service or dimension to continuing education has been generally acceptable to these institutions. This is held to be true even when measured against the limited objectives achieved to date in absence of user interest and acceptance of the CEU. CEU simply has to come into common usage before recognition programs can be built upon it. There is no incentive to package and record CEU unless there is an end-product use of the unit. We are at that critical transitional stage *now*.

User Acceptance Needed

Greater user awareness is needed at this time to create a demand for award and recognition of CEU. Indications of user acceptance should be encouraged now to match more closely the interest and effort of sponsors who are beginning to offer their continuing education programs to the public.

The effort of developing a greater demand among potential users of CEU can be brought about more quickly if members of the educational community help such groups set goals and achievement standards appropriate for their respective memberships. Unfortunately, there have been no resources available to date for the development of meaningful user programs. As a consequence, there has been no user effort to compare with the largely voluntary effort that has been expended by the task force on a number of potential sponsors of continuing education to make their offerings available.

Given assurance of the continued existence of the concept of CEU, the time is now at hand for the sponsors of continuing education to encourage the unit's adoption among potential user groups. Each sponsor can do this easily by offering to assist the various user groups he serves in establishing such educational parameters as:

1 — Appropriate content, level, and formats of instruction for the particular group.
2 — Evaluation measures applicable to individual performance, whether in terms of improved skill or proficiency in the field or in terms of evidence of changed behavior.

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3 — Meaningful rates of accumulation of total number of CEU to be acquired over a stated period of time by each user group for purposes of recognition being conferred on members.

It is apparent that these standards will vary to either side of given norms according to needs of the user group. Organ transplant techniques for surgeons differ remarkably from the educational requirements for park and recreational program directors in terms of content, level, format, sponsorship, and locale. However, both user groups measure the educational content of their respective learning experiences in terms of CEU. It matters little whether they receive the CEU from the same or different sources of sponsorship *as long as there is learning.*

Sponsors of continuing education have a traditional role to play in assisting with the establishment of the educational parameters for user group programs. These programs should base significant aspects of the individual qualification for recognition in terms of the accumulation of CEU. That is to say, an individual record built in substantial part upon the basis of CEU must have some corresponding respectability and status within the eyes of academia. If this cannot be, then a large number of us are following careers that are essentially without meaning. And worse than that, we would appear to be deceiving the very clientele groups we claim to serve through our efforts and through whom we make our living by the conduct of continuing education opportunities.

However, the sponsor of continuing education should not expect to make every determination concerning the career development needs of the great many user groups he serves on a year-to-year basis. The level of demand and the changing patterns of need are so great that no institution or its personnel can rightfully expect to stay abreast of all requirements. Neither the institution nor its faculty can expect to be the purveyor of all of the requisite learning experiences and self-development requirements imposed upon the individual for advancement within his field of endeavor.

Alternatives Unsatisfactory

Alternatives to adoption and use of CEU are either to continue to do little or nothing at all for clientele groups or to create highly individualized and localized programs of recognition. The first alternative begs the question. The second almost certainly leads to programs that are not transferable, are not accumulative, and are not readily comparable with similar programs in the same or closely related fields.

More than 40 of the latter distinct type of institutionalized programs have been identified nationally by the task force. The systems of measurement and recognition applied to continuing education by these programs are based upon such diverse elements as points, institutional endorsements, professional credit, professional degree, certificate programs, and certificate credit. Each of these exists as a separate star in the firmament, but we still lack the means, as it were, to journey from one to another in the fulfillment of one's lifetime intellectual needs.

An answer does present itself, however, through the concept of a continuing education unit. All that is needed is that the CEU be maintained sufficiently broad in its interpretation and used to fit all of these variable circumstances.

It is particularly significant and important that each user group sit in judgment as to the usefulness of the CEU in every instance of its application for future recognition purposes. It is in this way that all the special purpose programs and definitions in continuing education can be served by this single, simple, modular concept of CEU.

The sponsor concerns himself mainly with the content and the manner of presentation of the learning experience. The user groups concern themselves with the manner in which a particular offering serves the continuing education needs of their respective constituencies. Naturally, all offerings do not serve all groups. It is just that simple and straightforward; the user determines the use.

It is now time to get on with applications of the CEU that are built upon user aspirations and lead to meaningful programs of recognition that are equally acceptable to sponsors, users, individual learners and society in general. The CEU is the ether that binds the universe of continuing education. The CEU is not the vehicle of learning; it is the common measure of performance that makes it possible for society to judge individual accomplishment in the fulfillment of one's continuing educational obligation to combat obsolescence.

NAPE and CEU

It now becomes possible for NAPE, constituent state associations and local chapters — singly or in support of one another to develop meaningful programs of professional development based upon the following:

1 — Accumulation of CEU from a variety of sources of sponsorship, yet consistent with broad curriculum concepts developed by the NAPE body in counsel with licensing authorities, employers, and experts in educational or pyschological testing and evaluation.

2 — Development of broadly based programs of professional and self-development involving not only CEU but such other manifestations as: increased or improved performance on the job; broad spectrum services to the community; and demonstrated ability to perform at increasingly higher levels of responsibility.

3 — Appropriate forms of recognition spaced through time and each properly demonstrative of significant change in individual capability in the area of recognition. Thus, an NAPE member might be recognized for technical competence, leadership, singular contributions to the profession, or community services.

4 — Needless to say, all possible combinations of the several elements of a professional and self-development program may be designed into a single, thoughtful, meaningful curriculum largely unique to NAPE. Nevertheless, such a program should be comparable in terms of scope, level of difficulty, and evidence of changed behavior to the corresponding recognition program of any other membership organization occupying a similar place in terms of respect and esteem accorded to that organization by the public at large.